

“Unusual Treatment of Communism in *The Dispossessed* by Ursula K Le Guin and *Roadside Picnic* by Boris and Arkady Strugatsky”

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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to conduct a thorough investigation into the political aspects of the two science fiction novels of the Cold War Period: *The Dispossessed* (1974) by Ursula K. Le Guin, and *Roadside Picnic* (1972, translated into English 1977) by Arkadii and Boris Strugatsky. I have chosen these particular works not only because they were written and published during the Cold War period and were influenced by the existence of the communist party of the USSR, but also because they represent two camps of the Cold War respectively: The United States of America and The Soviet Union. During my research I found a surprising amount of criticism of both of the novels that in one way or another deals with the question of utopia. Most critics seem to agree that the central theme of these novels is a desire for a utopia or for a wish fulfilment.¹ There is not a lot of discussion on the question of politics and political systems within in the novels, especially when it comes to the Strugatsky brothers. The few critical articles I was able to obtain cannot agree on whether *Roadside Picnic* is pro-communist, neutral, or against it. Such disparity allowed me to make up my own mind and to follow the research path that was most interesting to me.

Since this thesis examines the representation of communism in these two works, in the first chapter of I must first briefly outline communism in general, and show the differences between Marxist communism, with its central claim of classless society without the central government, and Lenin's/Stalin's communism, with similar ideals, but different realities. I will also explain the connections between the communism of the USSR and the communist-anarchism that Le Guin describes in *The Dispossessed*, looking in particular at the cooperation between characters for the betterment of their planet and society. Additionally, in order to

¹ See, for example, Fredrick Jameson, Carl Freedman, or Istvan Csicsery-Ronay on this subject

connect the two novels, it is necessary to understand the political climate of the Cold War era in which Le Guin and the Strugatsky brothers wrote. Finally, the topic of communist propaganda in both countries is interesting to look at since the core of my discussion is the treatment of communism in both works, and the fact that it was unusual for that period.

Chapter two examines different political systems of both novel separately, highlighting similar approach of the authors when they establish and analyze their respective political systems. I argue that both authors look at their respective political systems critically, meaning through the lens of the Critical Theory as define by Carl Freedman. By doing so the authors are not only able to set up complex and believable social and political systems, firmly situated within a historical moment, but they are also able to thoroughly analyze these systems, identifying the biases of their narrators. This allows the authors to make it clear to the readers which sides the protagonists take and which outlook they have on the various systems they have to negotiate. The authors make sure to position their protagonists within two contradictory political systems, so their views and values become apparent to them and to us. Both authors question the capacity of examination itself, highlighting the fact that it is impossible for people with particular set of values to stay neutral and not react to the contradictions within a different and unknown political systems. Neither of the protagonists is an impartial observer. By going through the critical examination of the political systems, the reader is also able to identify the biases of the authors. Just as their protagonist, they are definitely not impartial.

The third chapter of the thesis compares features of the political and social systems of the novel with the political and social system of the Soviet Union, identify similarities and positives feature when it comes to Le Guin, and criticism when it comes to the Strugatsky brothers. By looking closely at the ways in which with the political systems are either similar or different I am

able to identify not only an extra layer of complexity of the critical approach to the various political systems, but also clearly see the authors' attitudes towards communism itself. The unusual treatment of communism becomes especially noticeable when I examine the fact that despite the serious propaganda against communism in the U.S., Le Guin does not condemn communism in her work, but on the contrary, she shows some positive features of the system, such as the power of cooperation and solidarity between individuals and groups of people. This does not imply that she was necessarily pro-communism, or that she was trying to glamorize it. She was writing about it truthfully, showing the possibilities but also the limitations. The Strugatsky brothers, on the other hand, in the midst of harsh censorship, show some negative features of communism, such as institutional corruption and lack of support for the working class people, which communism was supposed to provide. Just as Le Guin's favorable representation of communism was unusual for the U.S. at the time of the Cold War, The Strugatsky condemnation of it was unusual for Soviet Russia.

How would it have been possible for the authors to publish their unusual outlooks in the climate of the severe censorship and pro-soviet propaganda of the USSR Soviet Russia, or a propaganda against communism in the United State? The answer is in the genre of the novels: science fiction (sf). According to one of the utmost authority on genre, Darko Suvin, "Sf is ... a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (7-8). By "estrangement" he means that the world of a science-fictional text is different from our real world, and therefore "estranged." Unlike a world in a realist text, that is basically a mirror image of our own world, a world of science fictional text is a skewed representation of the real one. This alternative world of science

fiction, however, has to be recognizable to us, and has to have a connection with our world. This, for Suvin, signifies “cognition,” the fact that a world of a science-fictional text, despite its difference from our own, is still plausible, that there is a possibility of getting to that world from our own. Just as the real world has a past and history that has been determined by various decisions made throughout its existence and based on particular material conditions, the world of science fiction does not simply come out of nowhere, but is based on a logical and understandable past. This is the way Strugatskys were able to pass under the radar of Soviet censorship. This is also the reason that Le Guin, even though never facing such censorship as Strugatsky was also able to write about communism in an unusually positive manner.

The main point of the research, however, is to show the value of the critical approach to one particular political system, namely communism. When the prominent science fiction authors of the Cold War period go against the grain of the propaganda for or against communism, and instead critically assesses the system, it indicates the necessity of moving away from the binary understanding of political systems as being only good or only bad for the people, and looking more closely to and subjectively into the complexities and complications of politics as a whole, making our own informed political decisions.

Chapter 1: Historical Context, Marxism, The Cold War and The Propaganda

The USSR formed out of many revolutions and conflicts over the first twenty years of the twentieth century, primarily because the Russian people were dissatisfied with Tzarist rule and the sufferings that people experienced during World War I. In the beginning of the century, different political parties were formed in Russia with different agendas. The dissatisfaction with political and economic situation in the country, especially during and after World War I, plunged the country into many strikes and bloody demonstrations which eventually led to the overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917, and the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922. The most successful party during these countless strikes was the Bolshevik Party, who wanted to establish socialism based on the Marx Marx and Engels' ideas from Communist Manifesto which eventually became communism of the USSR. With the support of the masses, exhausted and impoverished by years of wars and struggle, and attracted to the idea of getting out of the yoke of rulers and big governments, the Bolshevik party took the power and established the communist government of the USSR (Zubov 169). The most prominent and successful person in this party was Vladimir Lenin, who wrote most of the proposals for the new political regime. This political regime became the reality of life for the Strugatsky brothers (Arkady was born in 1925, while Boris was born in 1933) and Ursula K. Le Guin (born 1929), though, of course, they were influenced by this regime quite differently, due to the difference in the proximity to it.

The basic tenets of USSR's communist regime, a political system both Le Guin and Strugatsky allude to in their works, was shaped by Lenin, the first, and arguably the smartest leader of the Communist party. He was the one who worked on the political agenda of the newly formed country, trying to implement the basic doctrines of Marxism as seeing in the Communist

Manifesto (Brucan 300). As per Marx, Lenin envisioned the means of production to be solely in the hands of the people (proletariat). He also tried to establish the equal distribution of “land to peasants and factories to workers,”² so that the property was communal and the power was in the hands of the proletariat. There was no place for the bourgeoisie in either Marx’s or Lenin’s philosophy. The property that was privately owned by this elite class, which included land and factories, was taken from them and equally distributed throughout the population. The major difference, however, between Marxist communism and Lenin’s communism was the establishment of the Party. It is this Party that turned out to be the ruling class in the USSR. Marx envisioned communist society without anyone ruling over anyone else; all power was to be split equally amongst the proletariat. Lenin, however, “was convinced that proletariat does not know what it wants, and therefore, there have to be leaders who set up agendas and propel the country the way it needs to go” (Zubov 127). This gave Lenin the way to set up the Party to begin with, and the excuse as to the necessity of its establishment. Thus, the communism of Marx, with the rule of the masses, turned into the communism of Lenin, with the “rule by the few” elite people, namely the one strong political party, the Bolsheviks.

There was also a smaller difference between Lenin’s and Marx’s communism, one that Lenin recognized and worked hard towards eradicating: Marxist communism was based on society with the strong and independent means of economic production, which Soviet Russia was seriously lacking. It was Lenin, who first brought attention to this fact in one of the first Party meetings of 1920s, and later the First Secretary of the Party, Stalin, came up with the five-year long plans in order to propel industrialization and faster increase the production. Through the various party organizations, he began to implement these plans starting in 1928. Soviet people,

² Lenin’s, and later Bolshevik’s famous slogan, the origin of which is very hard to trace, but which is nevertheless known to everyone in Russia to this day.

mostly unqualified workers, were mobilized to come together and to build countless factories, sometimes in hazardous conditions, and most of the time for almost no pay. During this first five-year period, people built around three-hundred large factories and around a thousand of the smaller ones all over the country (Zubov 907). Within a little over four years, the Soviet Union was put on the map as the industrializing country with some means of production, and it was on the backs of the proletariat that these achievements were built on. Working class people, however, were no closer to better living conditions or higher pay. The conditions of living around the new factories were abysmal. (Zubov 907). So before the country could achieve a true communist greatness, promised to the people by the original revolutionaries, people had to work basically for free, supposedly for the better future promised to them by the insistent propaganda. This is quite a big difference between the communism of USSR and that of Marx and Engels, which did not require such rigorous abuse of the working class populations. This is also the difference with the systems established by Le Guin and Strugatsky.

In *The Dispossessed*, Le Guin describes the anarchist society of the planet Anarres, where, just as in the communist society of the the USSR, people are focused on the cooperation, and on working solely for the betterment of their country and society. On Anarres, the planet where the protagonist Shevek was born and raised, natural resources are scarce and life is difficult. People have to rely heavily on each other in order to be able to survive in these harsh conditions and to build their communities. Everything necessary for comfortable living is run by the people and communities, without economic incentives. For instance, when Shevek wants to eat, there is food available for him in the refectory, cooked by people whose sole job and duty is to feed the population, so that the population continues to grow (Le Guin 102). This way, Shevek can focus on his duty, the study of physics, so that he can later teach others and develop new

technology. Shevek lives in dorms, just as all the single people live on Anarres, with six others in the room. He has the responsibility to clean the dorms and community areas once every ten days (or “the decad”). No incentives are given to him, except the firm belief that if he does not do what he has taken the responsibility to do, nothing will preclude his neighbor to do the same. Such an attitude might eventually lead to the dwindling and the disappearing of his entire society. If there is the need for more dorms or other structures, the community comes together and builds them. All the necessary tasks are taken care of by the people of the community. In the Soviet Union, the situation in many undeveloped areas was the same: people were living together in dorms and were working together for the betterment of society and for the survival of their community. The famous Soviet movie, “Devchata” (“The Girls” 1961), which was produced a decade earlier than Le Guin’s work, depicts this communal life perfectly. Just like *The Dispossessed*, the Soviet movie showcases the protagonist Tosia, somewhere in the middle of undeveloped Siberia, who lives in a dorm with five other girls and works hard to achieve high productivity in the work place not for the financial incentives, but for the betterment of the Soviet Union. She also has her chores of cleaning the dorm and the surrounding area once a week, just as the rest of the girls in the dorm. In the fashion of Anarres, when there is the need for more living space, Tosia and all her friends come together and build houses, each doing the jobs they can. This shows strong parallels between the organization of anarchist society of Anarres in *The Dispossessed*, and the way life was organized in many parts of Soviet Union.

In view of such strong similarities between the anarchist society of Anarres and the communist society of the USSR, it is important to highlight that Ursula K. Le Guin, an American author raised during the period of the “Red Scare” and writing during the tensions of the Cold War, does not condemn the structure and the way of life of the communist tendencies of

Anarresti society. Such condemnation would have been common during this period. The “Red Scare,” the period of Cold War between the U.S. and Soviet Union, was the period of intense fear of communism by the Americans and their government (Boyle 101). In the first decade following the World War II, the fear of communism as a threat to the national rights and liberties of the U.S. had infiltrated the government and, through the intense propaganda, the way of life of the regular people. Ursula K. Le Guin would have been in her teens at the time, but undoubtedly, the trials of many famous Hollywood people by the House of Un-American Committee for being communists or having the communist ties, would not have escaped her notice. There was also propaganda in the printed media, as seen from the Poster (fig. 1) that depicts communism as a monstrous octopus with Stalin’s face and tentacles long enough to take possession of the entire globe. According to the poster, this is the depiction of the way communism works, as seen by the government and the American people. Such representation was purposeful, to instill fear and show the immediate threat to the American life that communism was responsible for. By the time Le Guin was writing the novel, in the early seventies, the relations between the U.S. and USSR were thawing out, but the threat of communism as the essential force of ruin of American liberties was still alive and present (Boyle 102). It is, therefore, surprising, that Le Guin was not partial to these influences, but chose to write her novel as the depiction of many positive aspects of the communist society. She did not engage in propaganda for communism by any stretch of imagination, but she was critical of the political system as a whole, showing its positive and negative sides, going against the grain of the propaganda, and letting her readers decide for themselves as to the validity of this propaganda and the horrors of communism.

In *Roadside Picnic*, the Strugatsky brothers engage in the similar process of going against the grain of propaganda, as is Le Guin. They show inherent problems within the futuristic

communist society of the work even though they were writing in the climate of intense propaganda for the communism as the only valid political system in the world, and the strict censorship of anyone who was going against this view. As seen from the Russian propaganda poster (fig 2.), the USSR was constantly comparing itself to the West, showing the people that the country is capable of becoming better than the West in all aspects. This view was disseminated by the government in order to show people the greatness of communism. In addition, such propaganda was supposed to maintain control of the population, making sure that they continue to work solely for the purposes of the betterment of the country, while at the same time propagating the idea that the main work of the USSR is to bring communism to every part of the globe. Only positive representations of communist society were allowed, and most of the open critiques were censored by the government. However, Strugatsky brothers were able to get away with their negative representations by virtue of writing about imaginary words and times, that supposedly had no connection to the society they lived in. For instance, in *Roadside Picnic*, the “big” governmental institution, the International Institute of Extraterrestrial Cultures, that stands not only for the similar governmental institutions of the USSR, but for the surveillance state in general, is not shown favorably, as it should have been at the time. There is corruption, selfishness and complete lack of support for the working class. This is the reason why the protagonist, Redrick Schuhart is engaged in thieving and smuggling, and has a complete disregard for the jobs available to him. At the very end of the novel, he relates his ideas by saying: “I don’t want to work for you, your work makes me want to puke, you understand?” He is talking to the abstract governmental state here, and then continues: “If a man has a job, then he’s always working for someone else, he’s a slave, nothing more” (Strugatsky 191). While this may not have been the popular opinion during communism, it highlights a strong critique of the Soviet state.

and the necessity to work only for its benefit. The protections, which soviets were supposed to get from the government, like subsidies for food and housing were not really working very well. Many people were not able to support their families by only working for the state. In the novel, Strugatsky even depict those people who are in charge or in various positions of power within this institute or the military, which by then is slowly taking over the institute, are engaged in illegal activities. For instance, Richard Noonan, the representative of the electronics distributor for the entire institute, secretly owns a bar and an illegal brothel. It is evident that Strugatsky bothers saw and were willing to describe for all the world who was reading their books the inherent problems with communism. This make their work unusual for the Cold War period, and by looking at it side by side with the work of American science fiction author one can really shine the light on inherent complications with a “one sided” look on a political system. We see that both Ursula K. Le Guin and the Strugatsky bothers were working hard to critically evaluate communist political system from two different sides of the Iron Curtain. With this overview of the historical conditions of the time both authors were writing we can now move on to the more detailed exploration of various political systems present in both novel and the ways these systems go against the grain of propaganda for and against communism.

Section II: Political Systems of *The Dispossessed* and *Roadside Picnic*

Before we look at the ways in which Ursula Le Guin and the Strugatsky brothers evaluate the political systems they create within their respective novels in relation to the USSR's communism and propaganda, it is necessary to understand what these systems actually are. Both authors juxtapose two different, and in some ways even opposite, political systems: Le Guin contrasts communist anarchism with capitalism, while the Strugatsky compare a fusion of capitalism and communism to an unknown and alien system (or rather a space) of Zone. By looking at two different systems in such a way, the authors are able to look critically at the societies their main characters inhabit, as well as the ideologies those societies foster within the characters themselves. By "critically" here I mean through the lens of the critical theory defined by Carl Freedman as a "theory that is engaged in fundamental interrogation and self-interrogation, theory decisively free of conservative epistemological canons of tradition, appearance, or logic in the merely formal sense" ("Science Fiction and Critical Theory" 180). Basically, it is a theory that is capable of self-analyses and of questioning its own assumptions, without simply relying on dogma or previously established beliefs. This is precisely what the authors are able to accomplish by comparing two different systems within their works. It is through experience of these different systems, that both Shevek, the protagonist of *The Dispossessed*, and Redrick (Red) Schuhart, the protagonist of *Roadside Picnic*, can really make sense of their lives and societies they live in. By experiencing life within two different systems, one familiar and one unknown, the protagonists are confronted with their biases and are forced to evaluate themselves and others around them. With them, the authors work through their own biases and ways they understand the real world they live in. In effect, they force their readers to do the same. Thus the authors are able to show problems and complications within their societies

and enable readers see those problems not only within the societies of the authors, but also within their own.

Part A: Le Guin and *The Dispossessed*

Le Guin sets up two worlds on two different planets. Anarres is the native planet of Shevek, where he also spends most of his life. Barren, with very few natural resources, it is a hard place to live. The entire planet is homogenous politically and has only one country that bears its name. The social system of the planet is anarchist communism, which Shevek believes in explicitly, but also struggles with throughout the novel. Unlike Anarres, Urras is lush and beautiful, comfortable to live on, with plenty of natural resources. Also unlike Anarres, it is not homogenous and consists of multiple countries with multiple political systems, chief of which are capitalist A-Io and authoritarian Thu. We learn about both planets through Shevek and his experiences. Because he only visits A-Io when he travels to Urras, we learn the most about it out of all the countries of Urras. By situating her protagonist within two different political systems, Le Guin is able to show us their various aspects as experienced by one individual. This way she is able to examine both political systems critically, working her way through the biases of the protagonist as well as through her own.

The narrative structure of the novel facilitates the critical and dialect approach Le Guin takes in discussion political systems of the novel. The reader gets immersed into the two different systems simultaneously because of the circular structure of the novel and the non-linear timeline. The novel starts as the adult protagonist Shevek leaves his native Anarres and embarks on the journey to Urras. The next chapter, however, describes the Shevek's childhood, growing

up on Anarres and making long-lasting friendships. This structure continues all the way to the end of the novel, with odd numbered chapters describing the adult Shevek on Urras, and even numbered chapters describing his growing up and becoming a respected physicist on Anarres. Chapter twelve (penultimate one) ends where chapter one begins, thus closing the circle of the narrative. “The different periods in Shevek’s life,” according to Elizabeth Cummins, “thus circle each other in the reader’s mind, separate yet integrated, exchanging roles of cause and effect” (109). This is precisely the dialectic approach that Carl Freedman defines as “the understanding that everything is always related to everything else, and that causality never proceeds only in a linear fashion; throughout the immensity of the social field, causes are effects, and effects are causes” (108). By employing this non-linear structure, Le Guin allows the reader to examine different political systems critically and compare them side by side, deriving the deeper understanding by making the necessary comparisons without any delay in the narrative. On the other hand, it allows us to critically evaluate Shevek himself, the way he comes to know the world, and to be able to reflect on his limitations, and the limitations of his own knowledge.

Le Guin sets up the narrative of Shevek going to Urras (the present time of the narrative) within the historical framework of Shevek’s life, thus making readers learn about the two very different worlds through Shevek’s explanations of his own world and his confrontations with the unknown features of Urras. For instance, he is very surprised, when he learns that not only there are special clothes to wear just for sleep (pajamas), which he was given upon boarding of the spaceship bound for Urras, but that these clothes are not washed or recycled, but simply burned (Le Guin 13). For him, such behavior is wasteful. This suggests that his own world is not plentiful, and people learn to use everything for as long and as much as possible. We later learn that it is precisely the case on Anarres. When Shevek is on Urras and at the reception dedicated

to his arrival, he sees the magnificence of rooms and people's clothing and thinks of Urrasti word that "he had never had a referent for... 'splendor'" (23). Since there is no such concept in Anarresti vocabulary, it is evident that the organization of their society is not geared towards consumerism or luxury, concepts all too familiar for the capitalist society. Through the conversation between Shevek and one of the young Urrasti scientist, Pae, we also learn that there are no social structures or ranks within Anarresti society. Shevek is surprised when he asks Pae whether he can recognize Shevek as being equal to Pae, to which he answers, that Shevek is much too important compared to Pae, which is why they are not equal (80-81). Shevek is surprised when he hears it, and so we realize that on Anarres everyone is equal. But Shevek is only able to understand these foreign concepts by comparing them with his own understanding of the world, the understanding that is developed in him by living within the anarchist-communist world.

Le Guin writes from the point of view of communism, situating Shevek within the anarchist-communist political system from birth. Le Guin bases this political system on the very real writings of Zamyatin, Kropotkin and others, who wrote about anarchism and anarchist societies.³ According to Dan Sabia, "The novel offers an imaginative reconstruction and defense of the foundational assumptions and principles, aspirations and ideals, and key institutions and practices, characteristic of anarcho-communist ideology" (Sabia 112). In the novel, this political system is called Odonianism, in honor of Odo, who developed Anarresti anarchist-communist social system. The main precepts of Odonians (similarly to anarchist-communist ideology of our world) is sharing and cooperation; people have no private possessions of any kind. They also have no government, and according to the narrator, "no controlling center...no establishment for

³ See Larry McCaffery interview with Ursula K. Le Guin.

self-perpetuating machinery of bureaucracy and the dominance drive of individuals seeking to become captains, bosses, chiefs of state” (Le Guin 95). This passage highlights very well the Anarresti’s fear of absolute leadership, and of the egoistic tendencies of possessing everything and everyone. This is the reason they do everything to avoid being the egoists themselves, and are taught from a very young age that no one owns anything and that everything is the common use. As Shevek grows up and is confronted with various social situations, however, he realizes that not all Odonian ideologies are simple and not all of them are compatible with ways Anarresti actually live. He is forced to confront his own ideologies and reconcile his necessity to advance as a scientist, while staying a true Odonian.

As Shevek grows up on Anarres, he starts understanding the limitations of his native anarchist-communist society, learning that Anarresti sacrifice their principles for the comfort and convenience of steadiness within their society. As a teenager he realizes that his true passion is physics, and he slowly starts developing a revolutionary Theory of Simultaneity which will provide the theoretical basis for an instantaneous communication. But in order to completely develop the theory, he first needs to move to the largest institute of the country, and second he needs a research from Urras. However, Odonians, when fleeing Urras after the revolution had sealed themselves off on Anarres. There is a tiny space on Anarres, the Port, where a spaceship from Urras is allowed to come for a few hours eight times a year. They bring products Anarres is incapable of producing, exchanging them for ore that is abundant here. They also bring scientific research, but only to the very prominent scientists, one of which is Shevek’s mentor Sambul. Despite the fact that there is no ownership and everything that is developed or produced is always for the use and betterment of everyone on the planet, Sambul cannot accept Shevek’s success, and prevents him from publishing his research, so it does not get in any way to Urras.

He is also scared of undermining the foundation of the existing physical theories, even at the expense of great possibilities and progress. But Shevek needs the access to foreign minds and foreign research, because there are still some quirks in his theory that have to fix before it is completely developed. Sambul, however, does everything to prevent Shevek from ever getting research out. It is in this hard way that Shevek learns that the ideals of progress and enlightenment, so prevalent at the original writing of *Odo*, gradually becomes forgotten. Because of the isolation of Anarres, nothing new is developed, and nothing can be developed because any scientific progress requires free exchange of ideas that are not possible on the closed off planet with the relatively small population. Shevek also realizes that the absolute freedom of deciding for himself, without anyone telling what to do, another very important feature of Odonianism is also threatened. He is trying to get permission to leave Anarres, making an argument that it is for the betterment of all humanity, including Anarres, that his finished research will bring. He is refused, and has to fight and break ties in order to be able to leave his home planet and his so familiar ideologies. To a degree, he revolutionizes a revolutionary society of anarchists, reminding them what their society should be all about. It does not really work, and people are just angry with him when he boards the spaceship about to leave Anarres, probably forever. But no matter where he goes, he will never be able to escape himself. Thus he looks at the foreign world of Urras through the familiar ideologies of Anarres.

As we follow Shevek's struggle of developing the theory and trying to leave Anarres, at the same time we see him as an adult on Urras, reinforcing his utmost belief in the anarchist-communist principles he grows up with by observing all the problems inherent in the capitalist system of A-Io. While the planet is beautiful and full of natural resources, people are only concerned with money and gain. They live in a consumer society, and Shevek does not

understand why they need all the unnecessary goods they produce. Walking into an art gallery, he sees the price tag of a painting equaling the amount it would take to feed a small family for a year. Gallery assistant remarks that it is a work of art, thus trying to justify the price tag (209). But in Shevek's society art is produced for the pleasure of everyone, and he can spot right away that the painting is nothing short of worthless and only costs this much because of the value society attached to it. He also realizes that it is the government of A-Io who brought him to Urras, and they did so only to gain his research and make tremendous profits from it. As long as he works on the theory, they are will to pay for everything he may want or need (even though he does not really need anything). Knowing this fact makes him realize that he made a big mistake in coming to Urras. If he does not work for the government, he is worthless for them. He also learns about strict and unfair class system, seeing poverty and government unwillingness to do anything about it. In fact, the government did everything in their power to prevent Shevek from even seeing it, but he was able to find out anyway. Thus he realizes that a capitalistic system, even with the free exchange of ideas and ability to look forward and be progressive, is nevertheless backward, with its limitations of class society and consume economy. He was able to get the necessary research and progressive ideas to finish his research, but at the cost of being forced to give it up for the dominance of one society over the rest of the world and beyond. There are, however, other planets and other systems, with the World Government, of which our Earth (called Terra) seems to be a part as well. He learns about them, and realizes that they are his only option of getting his research out to everyone, at the same time. In the true Odonian fashion he developed his theory for the betterment of everyone, including Anarres, and in the true Odonian fashion he now wants to simply give it to everyone at once.

Thus, through the ideology of her protagonist Le Guin explores both capitalist and anarchist-communist systems by comparing them with one another, isolating their limitations but also acknowledging their positive aspects. People live in peace and self sufficiency on Anarres, everyone is equal and there is no poverty because there is no money, while Urras has technological progress and development capabilities. Shevek is in-between those systems, trying to fix at least the limitations of his home world. Le Guin shows that there is no one perfect system, but there must be the one that will be suitable for a particular society. In the words of Tony Burns, “The political significance of *The Dispossessed* is not so much that Le Guin tells her readers what to think and offers them the “right answers” to the moral and political problems with which it deals... It is, rather, that Le Guin engages her readers with these problems, and encourages them to think for themselves about them” (283). In other words, people should always be looking to better their societies by critically evaluating their limitations, at least, perhaps, through fiction that provides one of many hypothetical possibilities and alternatives. So we are left with the question: Is it possible to have some sort of a good fusion of capitalism and communism? Strugatsky offer us one version of such a fusion, but it does not seem to be better than either of the two systems of Le Guin.

Part B: Strugatsky and *Roadside Picnic*

Unlike Le Guin, the Strugatsky brothers do not go into a foreign star system or create a new planet; they set up the world of their novel on Earth, in what seems to be the United States of America (although some critics suggest it might be Canada).⁴ Such set up, however, would be sufficiently foreign for the Soviet readers at the time when the “Iron Curtain” was drawn tight.

⁴ In the Foreword to the novel, Le Guin suggests that the novel takes place in Canada. However, in the novel the narrator refers to a doctor as “the best in the state,” which makes me think it is the U.S. after all. Also when Doctor Pillman talks about Harmont residents moving out of town, he give an example of Detroit, and not of a city in Canada.

Like Le Guin, Strugatsky also explore two contradictory systems (or rather spaces, since one of them is not really political or social), critically comparing them to each other through the eyes of protagonist Red Schuhart. The novel centers around Red's successful and unsuccessful negotiation of these two spaces. One of the spaces is a fusion of capitalism and communism, in which Red lives, works and tries to survive. The second space is the lawless, dangerous and unknown Zone. Zone is a place where aliens visited Earth, and left after themselves unknown artefacts and cosmic garbage. There are six such Zones on Earth, of which the reader gets closely familiar only with the Harmont Zone, since that is the Zone next to Red's hometown Harmont. Red is a "stalker," one among many who risk their lives by going into the Zone to retrieve the artifacts left there. Most of the stalkers, including Red, are smugglers, who steal the artifacts in order to sell them on a black market. The Harmont Zone becomes the central feature of Red's life, and just like Shevek, who understands himself and his values by going into a foreign political system, Red learns about himself, his life, and his values by comparing his political system to the Zone.

Strugatsky leave political and economic system of the novel intentionally ambiguous, so that their readers reconstructs it themselves through the bits of information provided by the authors.⁵ There is no mention of a state, government, or party that would clearly indicate what kind of political system Red Schuhart lives in. However, it is evident that the main source of law, order and economy of Harmont is closely connected to the International Institute of Extraterrestrial Cultures and the Zone that this Institute studies. The economy of Harmont is tightly connected to obtaining and selling of the artefacts from the Zone, regardless of whether it is the Institute or some private parties who buy them. The only law that is consistently mentioned

⁵ This is most likely one of the estrangement technics used by Strugatsky to avoid censorship, which I have discussed in the introduction.

within the novel is that of illegally entering the Zone, stealing the artefacts and selling them on the black market. Such behavior is punishable by a prison term. And it seems to be the Institute who establishes and enforces these laws through the police and military presence, as well as through some secret organization within the Institute (we get a glimpse of it and no description) that is geared primarily towards controlling stalkers. Such tight control of individual behaviors is reminiscent of a totalitarian state. The economic system, however, seems to be driven, at least in part, by supply and demand, primarily of the artefacts. The artefacts themselves, however, do not have any real value, simply because people can not really use them for anything (at least for the first twenty years since the visitation). The scientific value of them, however, is enormous, and various research groups, the largest of which is, of course, the Institute, want to get their hands on as many new artefacts as possible. This feature seems to indicate some sort of capitalist environment. The presence of such contradictory features is the reason why I suggest that the system that Red Schuhart navigates throughout the novel is a fusion of communism and capitalism.

The Harmont Zone, on the other hand, is a space completely devoid of law and order; it is a strange, dangerous and seemingly empty space, that nevertheless propels the economy of Harmont by virtue of its artefacts. The Zone is the result of an alien visitation. It is about five square miles in diameter, filled with unspeakable dangers, strange physical phenomena, and interesting, desirable, and therefore valuable artifacts of the alien visitation. The reader is not privy to the actual visitation by aliens, or to the appearance of the Zone, since the narrative starts thirteen years after it, when the Zone is already an integral part of the daily lives of Harmont people. In the words of Stanislaw Lem, “the story shows how the Zone has become surrounded, as a foreign body does when it has penetrated a living human organism, only in this case by a

tissue of opposed interest groups: those connected with the official guardianship of the Zone (i.e., the UN), but also the police, the smugglers, the scientists, and-let's not forget them-the members of the entertainment industry” (Lem 322). Lem’s metaphor is telling because it underscores the fact that any political and social system is, in a way, a living organism that changes and evolves due to the inside and the outside influences. So does Harmont evolves and changes because of the visitation that left behind this mysterious and dangerous Zone. Because we get to follow the protagonist for a period of almost ten years, we are actually able to see the process that Lem calls “surrounding” first hand. The Institute is only one of a few significant groups that shape this process. There is also an underground culture of stalkers, who all know each other, work for the same people and hang out at the same places. In a silent opposition to stalkers is a religious society of Warring Angels who believe that the artefacts are evil and have to be returned into the Zone and left there. And if that is not enough, there are also those who create various types of businesses connected to the Zone that does not actually involve going into it: the most popular of which is organizing picnics for the military and tourists. All of these activities surrounding the Zone show how much influence it has on Harmont’s social and cultural life, as well as how central the Zone becomes to the people within just a few years of the visitation and regardless of all its dangers and unpredictability.

For Red Schuhart Zone is not only an income generator, or what makes him a part of an underground culture: it is a place that shapes his life and helps him better understand himself and the world around him. It is because of the Zone that he experiences his first loss of a close friend, a Russian scientist Kirill, who he works with at the Institute. It changes him and the course of his life since he blames himself. Not only that he suggested the expedition into the Zone, but he was also careless in not preventing Kirill’s accidental step into a mysterious silver web, which

facilitated his death. Kirill is an idealist who believes, in the word of Red, that the Zone is “a hole into the future” and that the artefacts found in it “will change [the] whole stinking world” (Strugatsky 42). Since the artefacts open an array of new possibilities and facilitate creation of new scientific theories that did not even seem possible, Kirill’s remarks make sense. Red also subscribes to Kirill’s idealism, up until the point when he learns about his death. With the death of Kirill, Red turns to the pragmatism of inability to support his family with the little money he gets working for the Institute, and idealism of the betterment of the future though the artefacts of the Zone seem to die together with his friend. Red decides to leave the Institute and becomes a full time stalker. For the next seven years he will have to make hard choices, most of which will involve the Zone.

The first choice is sell a very dangerous Zone’s artefact “witches brew” to the private party, in order to provide money to his family while he is prison. By the time he turns twenty-eight, Red is a professional stalker with no other occupations. He gets involved with the black market dealer Raspy, who commissions him to get the “witches brew,” a Zone’s substance that can go through the hardest plastics and metals and destroy them in the process. They do not explain their purpose, but Red has a feeling that nothing good can come of it, since he saw what the substance do during his visits to the Zone. He is able to get it, but since he does not trust Raspy decides not to sell it him during their meeting, and instead sells him other “swag.”

Unfortunately for Red, when he goes into his favorite restaurant “Borscht”⁶ after the deal, he gets into the hands of the police. He is able to escape, but realizes that he will be caught eventually anyway. So he devises a plan to sell the “witches brew” to Raspy in a way that Red’s wife and

⁶ The word “Borscht” is intentionally misspelled. There is no “t” at the end of the name of the famous Russian soup. However, most Americans pronounce it in exactly the same manner, with the sound “t” at the end, so Strugatsky make their own private joke on Americans who cannot really spell or pronounce Russian words. In the novel this fact is brought up by Kirill.

daughter get all the money. This is a hard choice for him, but he goes through with it because he is backed into a corner. Since the Institute will not let him provide for his family in the only way he sees possible, he has to go against it no matter what the cost. And the cost is truly high: in an experiment by a private company, “witches brew” kills thirty-nine people and leaves many more injured. We know that it was the same artefact that Red sold to Raspy since no one before or since was able to get it out of the Zone. This is another consequence of the Zone that Red has to live with.

By the last chapter of the novel, Red is caught in a seemingly last struggle between the Institute and the Zone: he goes against society and the system established by the Institute, so his only hope is to find some sort of salvation and answers in the Zone. After serving his last term in prison, Red comes and learns that most of the old-time stalkers are dead, much of the black marked is had disappeared, and the old-timers that are still left are trying to get into other types of businesses associated with the Zone. For Red, such alternatives will not work, since the only talent he possesses, the one that Institute completely failed to appreciate, is his experience with the Zone, being able to navigate its dangers and come out of it relatively unharmed. Through one of the old-timers, the Vulture Burbridge, whose life he once saved dragging him out of the Zone on his back, Red learns that there is a mysterious artifact called the Golden Ball, that is capable of granting wishes. There is, however, one problem, the Golden Ball requires a human sacrifice. Directly next to the Ball, there is an anomalous gravitational field, that stalkers call the “meat grinder,” and someone has to go through it and die in order for it to disappear and leave the path to the Golden Ball clear. Red, however, is past caring at this point, since at home, his mutated daughter is waiting for him, a daughter who is hardly human at this point. This is another price that stalkers have to pay for entering the Zone: all their children are born with strange mutations.

On the way to the Ball Red thinks that he knows exactly what he wants, but by the time he actually reaches it, he re-evaluates his life and realizes that his life is completely devoid of meaning. So like Shevek, he is going to try and change the entire society, everything and everyone, and that will be his final wish for the Ball. As he is walking, however, he has all his wishes and priorities in order: "All right. The Monkey, Father...Let them pay for everything, may those bastards suffer, let them eat shit like I did" (191). This is a snapshot of Red's life at this point. The Monkey is what he affectionately calls his daughter. His father is a reanimated corps, another one of the anomalies of the Zone. He was buried in the cemetery that became part of the Zone, got reanimated and just came home. For all intents and purposes, however, he is still a corps, only he is able to walk and perform minimal human actions. Thus, Red does not really have a normal family any longer, and all he wants is for them to be human again. By "them" Red means the state and the Institution, who left him to fend for himself all his life, not accepting his talents and therefore causing him to live in the shadow of the Zone. He wants them to experience the society he was forced to live in and the real struggle of being an outlaw. He quickly realizes, however, that everything he is wishing for are simply curses or jumbled words with no meaning. But he really wants all his struggles to count for something. That is the reason, why in the end, he makes a simple wish for his entire society and for the future: "HAPPINES, FREE, FOR EVERYONE, AND LET NO ONE BE FROGOTTEN!" (193). This is not even his wish; it is the wish of the young man who had died for Red to reach the ball. It is also the last words of the novel. We do not know what happens, and whether the wish was granted or not. The impulse, however, was there. The desire to change the existing social and political system and make life better.

It is evident that Strugatsky, in the fashion as Le Guin, explore their political systems and spaces critically and in relation to one another. They extrapolate the limitations and issue of the two spaces the protagonist has to negotiate. Unlike Le Guin, however, they show the fusion system that does not really work, a system with features of both communism and capitalism. In the end, the message is still the same: it is up to the readers to evaluate their experiences and to relate those experiences with hypotheticals that the science fiction authors conveniently provide for them. Can we agree that one particular system is necessarily good and one is bad? To be able to better formulate an answer to this question, we can proceed to the authors' understanding of the particular political system, namely communism of USSR. The one system that was very much a reality of life for both Le Guin and the Strugatsky brothers.

Section 3: Le Guin, Strugatsky, and the Propaganda

As we have seen in the previous section, there are features of communism in both *The Dispossessed* and *Roadside Picnic*. What is not yet evident, however, are the ways in which these features similar to the communism of the USSR, and the ways they are related to the propaganda, unusual representation of communism, and the complexities of politics in general. With the case of the *Dispossessed*, it is a little easier to identify the communist features of Anarres. *Roadside Picnic*, however, presents a little more challenge. Both critics are based on the social and political organization of societies, and both present features similar to those of the communist state. Unusual representation of communism is directly connected with the complexities of the political systems I analyze within this work. It is an additional layer imposed on the critical and dialectic approach the authors chose to relate their views and their attitudes towards the political social systems they lived and wrote in. Like no other criticism, it shows their own biases and the ways they work through them in order to create and analyze complex social and political system, and offer their readers to do the same. Neither of the authors overtly support or disapprove of communism within their works. They do not impose their view on the readers and give them the answer as to which political system is good and which is a bad one. They want to make readers look critically on the politics in general, politics within the novels, and politics in their daily lives. Analyses and criticism is the first step towards change.

Part A: *The Dispossessed*

The features of social and political organization, particularly the way of life on Anarres, provides the most telling similarities between the anarchist-communism and the communism of the USSR. On Anarres, people have the utmost belief in their social and political system, so they value above all else cooperation and sharing. Without these values their society will not survive.

This mentality was also adopted in the USSR, with its cooperative ownership of the land and factories. The dormitory living conditions of the people of Anarres also resemble the living conditions in parts of USSR that needed to be developed. There are similar practices of job postings on Anarres and in the USSR, just as there are analogous dedication to the community work and volunteer projects and organizations. All of these features provide the necessary connections between the way of life on communist anarchist Anarres and purely communist USSR, thus showing that when it comes to the way societies were organized, these political systems are quite similar.

One of the most striking similarities between Anarres and the USSR is citizen's focus on sharing and cooperation. There are no possessions or private property on Anarres, and children are taught from a very young age that they do not own anything, and that everything on their world is for every person to enjoy equally, from natural resources, to the education and even food and shelter. When baby Shevek is interrupted by another baby from his activity of staring at and admiring the bright sun beam, he pushes the baby away, stating that the sun beam is his. Promptly, the nurse in charge of taking care of the babies admonished Shevek, telling him: "It is not yours. Nothing is yours. It is to use. It is to share. If you will not share it, you cannot use it" (Le Guin 27). This line, even though spoken to a baby, sums up the entire way of life on Anarres. Everything is there for the common good of humanity. No one profits from having something, even if it is a sun beam, reaping all of its advantages. The society and community to which people belong will provide the necessities of the day-to-day living, and it will all be given out freely. While it was not completely the same situation in the Soviet Union, since it did have money economy, all the lands and properties belonged to the state and the cooperation and sharing were considered to be very important values. The farms, for instance, were cooperatives

of people working together. Every person in the cooperative owned a portion of land, but no one person worked exclusively on their own portions. Everyone toiled equally on the entirety of the field, and everyone got their share of profits and goods. Similarly, the factories were cooperatively owned by the workers. The managers were always appointed by the committees of representatives of the workers, and those representatives were chosen by and from the workers themselves. The profits were also shared by all of the workers. All houses were provided to the people on the equal bases, most of the time from the places they worked at and were also managed by the cooperatives of the people living in them. It is evident that cooperation and sharing were very much a part of social organization of both Anarres and the Soviet Union, making the two systems similar in this respect.

Another interesting similarity between Anarres and Soviet Union, is the free housing in general, and dormitory style of living in particular. As previously mentioned, there is no private ownership of any kind on Anarres. Syndicates (which are basically cooperatives) in charge of the maintenance and reparse of the building provide housing for the people of Anarres no matter where they are and no matter what they do. For instance, when Shevek travels to the Central Institute of the Sciences from his small college on the other side of the planet, he simply walks in to the dormitory of the Institute and asks if they have a space available for him to stay in. The room is provided for him without any questions, simply because he needs them at that particular moment (102). There was a similar situation in the Soviet Union. When young people were sent to the undeveloped regions, the living accommodations were provided for them, in the very similar dormitory fashion of Anarres. Many factories and enterprises also provided free rooms in the multi-room apartments for those in need. Since communism was based on the idea that everyone enjoys the access to the resources equally, as long as they work for the benefit of the

society, everyone will be provided with the minimum standard of living. For those who put in many years of labor, the government provided free apartments, in which families lived one generation after another.⁷ It was not uncommon for people to get them. We see that when it came to the living accommodations, both people of Anarres and people of the Soviet Union were provided for. The free housing and access to living accommodations are the two very important points in the organization of society and the fact that they are present in both the system of Anarres and the system of the USSR, once again highlights the similarities between the two political systems.

The dedication to community work and volunteer projects through various organizations is another big part of the social and political life of people both on Anarres and in the Soviet Union. For both countries, community and volunteer work are essential to ensure the survival and continuation of the society as a whole. On Anarres, every citizen has responsibilities of cleaning up communal areas, or to do work for the city and community. They use the system of rotation, ensuring that every citizen participates, and cultivating the pride in doing community work from a young age. As a young man, Shevek “always volunteered for the ‘heavies’ (hard manual labor) on the tenth-day rotational duty,” such as helping in building the new housing or roads (48). He is convinced that it is his duty to help his fellow people, and that doing hard labor is the best way of accomplishing it. Later, as an adult, during the long famine, he volunteers for the two-year employment on the remote farms, leaving his wife and child behind. Most of the people volunteer for extra work during the hard times: “When the wells in the northern suburbs [of the capital city] failed,” describes the narrator, “temporary mains were laid by volunteers

⁷ My parents and grandparents were some of those people who were provided with free apartments, which serves as proof that this was a real feature of the communism.

working in their free time, skilled and unskilled, adults and adolescents, and the job was done in thirty hours” (247). This shows how different people of different skill levels come together to perform the hard tasks their community demands of them without regard for their free time. These people are proud of their accomplishment and the short time it has taken them to do the job well. There were no economic or other incentives for this work, other than the continual surviving of the community and people. Similar projects were done in the Soviet Union. When the government established the first Five-Year Plan of Development, the young men and women were called to the remote places of the countries to build multiple factories and farm communities. They were working for the betterment of their country and out of the utmost belief in communism. They were told that making the Soviet Union into a powerful nation will ensure the spread of communism far and wide, and that this way the world will become a better place (Zubov 895). There were smaller community volunteer projects, subbotniks (a word derived from Russian word for a Saturday), when people would go the public areas on their days off (usually Saturdays, hence the name) and pick up trash, fallen leaves, and clearing up snow. Similar to the Anarres, such projects were also done for the benefit of the community and without any incentives. This is yet another valuable similarity between Anarres and the USSR.

The aforementioned parallels between many social features and ways of life of both Le Guin’s Anarres and the Soviet Union show that my comparison of the two systems is not only warranted by also valid. When the two political systems have so much in common, it is possible that Le Guin could have based her anarchist communism, at least in part, on the communism of the USSR. All of the similarities that I have so far described, however, are positive, and therefore also clearly emphasize the point that Le Guin did not condemn communism, but rather showed some good characteristics that the system possesses. In the historical moment of the Cold War such

positive features could not have been accepted easily. Nevertheless, it is quite unusual even for the readers today to see a novel with positive features of communism written in during the Cold War. On top of that, this work had won many prestigious Awards, such as both Hugo and Nebula awards in one year. So it was not a hidden away political piece of literature, but a widely read and acknowledged novel. As to Le Guin, it seems obvious that she has a sympathy and leanings toward at least some sort of a modified version of socialism. While she was by no means egging in the propaganda for the communism of Soviet Union within the novel, the thoroughness with which she created the world of Anarres show that she is at least partial to this world. She lets her readers decide for themselves, and to try and figure out why it is that communist and anarchist societies did not work in their pure form.

Part B: Roadside Picnic

In the same unusual way that Le Guin went against propaganda of her country showing positive features of communism, Strugatsky went against propaganda of their country showing all the oppressiveness and difficulties of communism. Once again we see these critiques from the organization of society and its practices with the novel. One of the most prevalent criticisms I find in *Roadside Picnic* is inability of the state, or in this case the Institute, to take care of the working classes.

Towards the end of the novel Red realizes the main problem with the society he lives in: there are no protections of any kind for the working classes, and if the Institute does not want you, or if you are not good enough for them, you will just have to fend for yourself. Red realizes that he cannot possibly make enough money to support his family being a lab assistant. Red's attitude towards working for someone else comes to fruition within the last pages of the book: "Get a job?," he says, "And I don't want to work for you, your work makes me want to puke,

you understand? If a man has a job, then he's always working for someone else, he's a slave, nothing more – and I've always wanted to be my own boss, my own man, so that I don't have to give a damn about anyone else, about their gloom and their boredom..." (Strugatsky 191). Here Red talks to the state and the Institute, but it is quite obvious that this is a part Strugatsky critic of the Soviet State. In the words of a critic John Moore, Red experiences "innate hatred of the system that constrained him" (67). What he means is that Red is unwilling to work for the state, because the state does not do anything for him. The State did not even give him a basic education. In the article Moore describes the reason for such attitudes: Red's father was a factory worker who died when Red was still a child. Strugatsky are basically criticizing the system that turned proletariat into a poor labor force. There was no entrepreneurship in the Soviet Russia, every person was working for the state, and therefore for someone else. For many people it was not enough to work for the state, since there was never enough money or career advancement. Red has no choice in the novel. The only way left for him to work for himself is to do something illegal, namely smuggling, which was a very popular type of activity for people who worked for themselves and who were able to make money. Strugatsky lived in the climate of scarcity and the proliferation of the black market for European and American imports, especially jeans. Anyone who was able to go abroad from the Soviet Union always brought as much of good as they can possibly take through customs, selling most of it later on and making good income. Strugatsky, no doubt, saw the Iron Curtain as one of the major drawbacks, and wanted to share these attitudes with their readers. People were put into the position of breaking the law by the state, and Strugatsky criticized it. That is the reason why they made their protagonist a "stalker," a thief and a smuggler. It is a critique of communism.

The establishment of a strict border, with border patrols and walls is another point of critic of Strugatsky. It is not difficult to draw a parallel between the forbidden and dangerous Zone, and the way the Communist State described the capitalist world. People were forbidden to go anywhere except the neighboring communist republic, and many goods that were brought from abroad were confiscated. In his essay on Strugatsky, Viacheslav Ivanov bring up an interesting point in regards to the establishment of such separations. He mentions famous Russian saying: "Rotten compliance with rotten laws," stating traditional Russian defiance of forbidden boundaries (19). Here, the Strugatsky Brothers criticize the proliferation of the illegal activity around a space, simply because this space was outlawed by the state. Russians are not about to listen to the state laws that prevent them from profiting.

The Institutional corruption, the secret police forces and the ability of people in power establish and run underground nightclubs and bars is yet another feature of Strugatskys' critique. Richard Noonan, who works for the institute as a representative of suppliers of electronic equipment is also a part of the secret organization within the institute that is determined to eradicate stalkers. On top of that he owns a brothel, from which he receives a tidy income. Through that brothel he gets his hands on the stalker's artefacts, through a third party of course, and then officially sells those same artefacts back to the Institution. Such corruption was not uncommon among the higher ups of the Soviet Party. Those who were able to reach the positions of power were most likely set up for life, unless they fell from grace and were sent to Siberia. This was possibly, of course, only on the backs of hard working proletariat, since instead of giving cash incentives and raise wages, the powerful just kept money for themselves.

Such critiques of the communist state were quite unusual in the Soviet Literature, particularly due to the severe censorship of author who has something bad to say about the

USSR. Same as Le Guin Strugatsky received many awards for their novels, including *Roadside Picnic*. This work is one of the most famous Soviet science fiction novels, so it was not just an unknown piece of literature, but in fact a widely read work. Throughout the year, the novel was published in over twenty foreign languages, and Strugatsky received awards and honors for many of foreign publications as well.

Conclusion: Politics Are Not Binary

It is evident that Ursula K. Le Guin and The Strugatsky Brothers show that politics in general, and political systems in particular, are complex and complicated. By examining the anarchist-communist political systems of Anarres critically, showing the good and the bad features of this system, Le Guin not only goes against the grain of the U.S.'s propaganda against communism, but also shows the difficulty in the binary representation of politics. Similarly Arkady and Boris Strugatsky examine their political systems critically, but in the climate of pro-soviet propaganda are able to show the negative features of communism. Nothing is only good or bad, especially political systems that were developed by many generations of many different peoples. Before condemning a political system as evil, or praise one as perfect, it would be wise to try and grasp the entire picture with all of its complexities first. Ursula K. Le Guin and the provides the reader with all of the necessary tools to get that accomplished. And she was not alone. At the very same time, on the other side of the planet in the hostile USSR, two brothers were engaging in the very similar critical project. Strugatsky Brothers were writing about the communism of USSR in the very similar way that Le Guin was writing about it. They were also going against the grain of the propaganda, in their case, however, the propaganda for communism. Together, these great science fiction authors were creating the worlds which would allow for critical analyses of the time and place that the authors were writing in for the purpose of showing that politics are inherently multifaceted and have to be evaluated critically and subjectively at all times.

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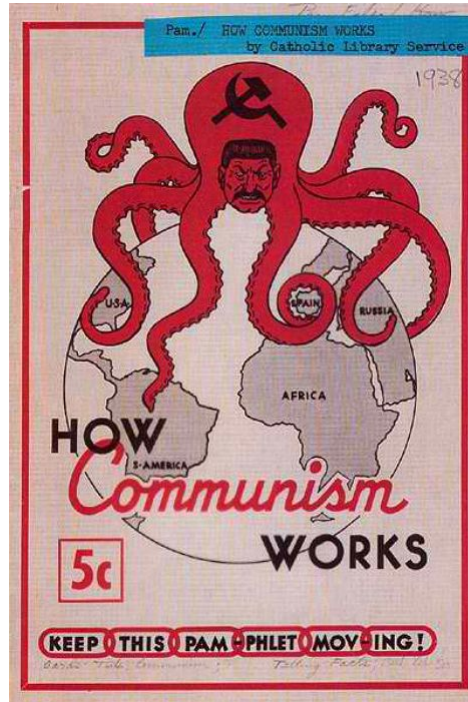
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(Fig. 1.) Anti-Soviet U.S. Propaganda

Fig.1. Taken from ARTstore database. Creator : Catholic Library Service. Title : How Communism Works. Date: 1938 URL:
<http://library.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=%2FTJMcj8nO1oyLyQ0dTF6Rn4%3D>



(Fig 2.) Soviet Propaganda

Translation (mine). Us/Them. We transform deserts into the blooming cities;
 They turn cities and villages into deserts.

Fig 2. Taken from asskolkovo.com